

July 2019



**KEN BURKE**

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT  
AND COMPTROLLER

**VOICE**

**You Have A  
VOICE  
Report  
Cybercrime**

**FRAUD ALERT**

**SIGN UP TODAY** and receive free alerts when a document with your name is recorded in Official Records. Protect yourself from fraud. **CLICK HERE.**

**GET IN TOUCH:**

**Write:**

Public Integrity Unit  
Division of Inspector General  
Fraud Hotline  
510 Bay Avenue  
Clearwater, FL 33756

**Call:**

(727) 45FRAUD  
(727) 453-7283

**Fax:**

(727) 464-8386

**E-mail:**

fraudhotline@mypinellasclerk.org

**Internet:**

www.mypinellasclerk.org  
www.twitter.com/pinellasig  
www.facebook.com/igpinellas

## Bogus Web Development Scam Targeting Small Businesses

Starting a small business is both challenging and rewarding. Unfortunately, scammers are eager to exploit the learning curve small business owners must take on to launch a new business.

The National Consumers League (NCL) has begun receiving dozens of complaints from consumers who sought to build a website for a side gig, and from established small business owners seeking to improve their website or purchase IT equipment to better serve their community.

The fake web developer scam can take many forms, but regardless of the shape the scam takes, the result is always the same. Sadly, NCL has received dozens of complaints detailing similar stories with small business owners reporting losses from \$2,500 to as much as \$50,000. While the web development scam can be devastating, there are steps you can take to ensure that your small business starts off on the right foot.

- 1. If it sounds too good to be true, it is probably a scam.** If you find a web developer or an IT solutions company that offers you products that are well below the cost of their competitors, or if they can deliver you a digital product in an unusually short period of time, they are probably scamming you.
- 2. Check reviews.** See what their former customers wrote about them. If a company provides an inferior product or charges their customers and does not provide any product, people will often take to the internet to voice their concerns. Before sending any money, check reviews, and the company's response to the reviews, on sites like Yelp and Google.
- 3. Check to see if they have complaints filed against them at the Better Business Bureau (BBB).** When consumers are wronged, they will often go to the BBB seeking help. If a business has a lot of complaints filed against them, they are probably not a good choice for your small business.

Spotting a fake web developer scam can be tricky, but with a little research you can greatly reduce your chances of falling prey to them. Still, even the best fraud spotters can get tricked from time to time. If you spot this scam, or fall victim to one, please file a complaint at [Fraud.org](http://Fraud.org) via a secure online complaint form. NCL will share your complaint with their network of more than 90 law enforcement and consumer protection agency partners who can—and do—put fraudsters behind bars.

Source: Fraud.org - "[Bogus web development scam targeting small businesses](http://Bogus web development scam targeting small businesses)"



**For more information or to file a complaint, contact Pinellas County Consumer Protection at (727) 464-6200 or visit [www.pinellascounty.org/consumer](http://www.pinellascounty.org/consumer).**